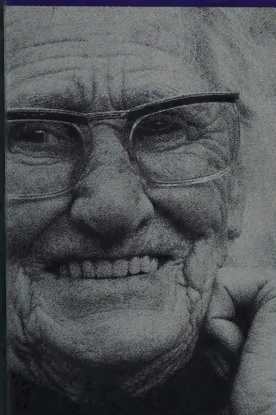
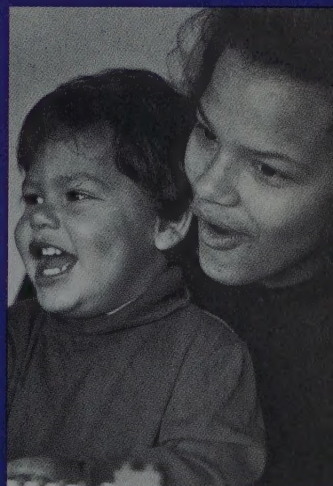
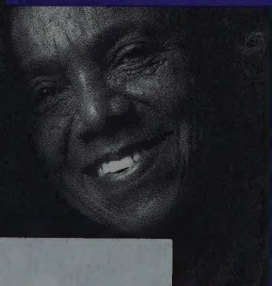
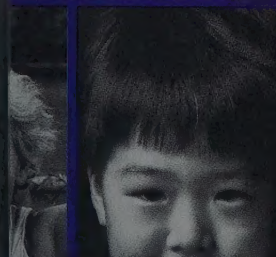


LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

FEBRUARY
1993



A woman
is every
age she's
ever been.



JAN 21 REC'D

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For Growth in Faith and Mission

Cover meditation ♦♦

The only way to grow up to be a sweet old lady is to start practicing when you're young."

I remember when my mother read those words in a magazine article. I was in high school, so she must have been about 52 years old. (Actually, she always seemed "about 52" to me, but that's not the point.) The words struck a chord in her. Like a favorite Bible verse, the more she thought about it, the more the words made sense.

Mom must have put in some good practice time, because she did indeed turn into a sweet old lady. Not sappy-sweet. Not fragile-sweet. Mom became a kind of sweet that said "You can count on me," "I'm your neighbor," and "How can I help?"

Mom grew into the kind of sweet old lady who knew when something was important enough to get worked up over, and, better still, when it wasn't.

Mom grew into the kind of sweet old lady who didn't have time for pretense or show. What you saw was what was real.

Mom grew into the kind of sweet old lady who had enough things in her life, so instead she collected experiences and friends.

Mom grew into the kind of sweet old lady who, given a terminal diagnosis, saw little reason to change her life. She continued to live out her faith by taking care of family, herself, her business, going to church and circle, being a friend. . . . She continued her work as a funeral director. She continued to bake a cake for every funeral luncheon. She continued to complete her daily crossword puzzle.

When Gladys, a new friend, heard of mom's illness, she sprang into action. Home-made buns. Check-in phone calls. "At my age," 84-year-old Gladys announced in a no-nonsense way, "I'd better be doing good for other people."

As mom's long-remembered quote from a long-forgotten magazine reminds us, sweet old ladies are made, not born. To grow up to be a sweet old lady like mom and Gladys takes some practice. ■

Sue Edison-Swift
Managing Editor

ON THE COVER:

Front cover photos by Jean-Claude Lejeune, top left and right, middle left and bottom left; Jim Whitmer, middle right; Tom Lindfors, bottom center; Jeffrey High, bottom right. Back cover photos by Jeffrey High, top left; Marilyn Nolt, bottom left; Mark J. Goebel, right.

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A woman is every age she's ever been.

That insight has been the shaping principle behind this issue. LWT has had special issues on men and young women; an issue on "older women" ("older" meaning "fortysomething" and up) seemed an appropriate follow-up. But once planning began for such an issue, advice came from all quarters.

"Don't put 'older women' on the front cover, even in quotes!"

Why? It seems that virtually no woman thinks of herself as, well, "older." Or, if she does, it is only in the privacy of her mirror. For old age is, as they say, "always 15 years older than you are."

Then came the substitute suggestions from friends, colleagues, and the writers for this issue: "women come of age," "maturing women," "aging women," and "women of a certain age," the last rendered more mellifluously in the French from whom the concept comes—*femmes d'un certain âge*."

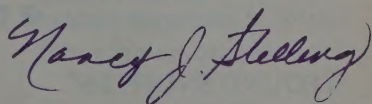
A participant at last summer's Women of the ELCA leadership gathering suggested a phrase from a Marlene Wilson book: "chronologically gifted."

Instead we opted for "a woman is every age she's ever been," because the words seem to capture the

essence of age—any age. And this issue seeks to give voice to those insights and experiences that "living through things" brings to each woman of faith, whether those experiences have been wonderful, sad, pleasant, wrenching, fulfilling, touching, devotional, challenging, or some combination of the above.

Whether it is the story of a pastor turned activist (p. 32), or the hymn writer who gave us "Jesus Loves Me" (p. 46)... whether it is the story of a Lutheran woman's magazine editor (p. 38) or a single woman sharing the joy and wholeness of being single (p. 12)... whether it is the story of life after divorce or widowhood (p. 15) or the older woman who takes advantage of the church's many educational opportunities (p. 10)—we are all richer for seeing how God works to bring about good for all God's people, even us.

For the God of all ages, who knows us both in time and in eternity, promises to be with us always, even "to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:20). ■



EDITOR

FEATURES

4 FREEDOM TO BE YOURSELF

Alene H. Moris

As a woman grows older she can throw out the prescribed scripts and write her own. 9

7 BECOMING WISE WOMEN

Julie Dennison

"One of the best things about getting older is loosening up and getting more real." 9

10 LEARNING IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

Romania E. Cline

An avid participant tells of Lutheran camps, Elderhostels, and the Association of Older Lutheran Adults (ALOA). 9 9 A

12 A SINGLE GRACE

Susan K. Wendorf

Susan is "46 years old, single since birth, and quite happy, thank you." 9

15 Return to Singleness: ALONE OR LONELY?

Carolyn J. Kilday

Through death or divorce, women who return to a state of singleness share some common concerns and hopes. 9 9

28 GUMPTION IS AN OLD-FASHIONED WORD

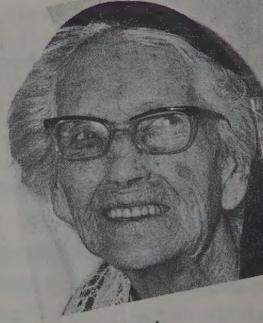
Mary Vaughn Armstrong

A note from mother becomes a lifelong source of encouragement. 9 9

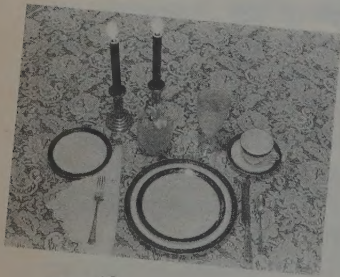
30 "I FOUND SNUFFLES"

Gretchen E. Daum

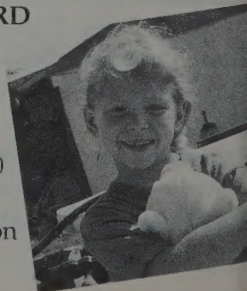
Even hurricane winds can't break the connection between godparent and godchild. 9 9



page 4



page 12



page 30

32 GLORIA WEBER:

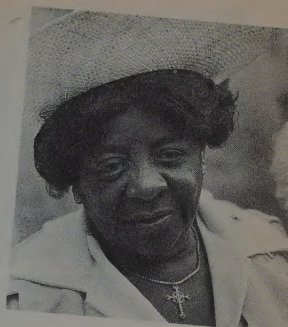
Advocate and Activist

Robin R. Mueller

A former Lutheran pastor now heads a chapter of OWL—the Older Women's League. **A C G**

34 "LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER" and "WARNING"

Two poems from the anthology *When I Am an Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple* express different feelings about growing older. **C G**



page 34

46 HYMNS AND HERS:

Anna Bartlett Warner

Karen Bates

A new column for LWT begins with a profile of the writer of "Jesus Loves Me" and a devotion on that famous hymn. **G C**

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| * Cover meditation | 40 Earthcare |
| 1 Editor's note | 42 Women of the ELCA |
| 19 Shorttakes | 46 Devotion |
| 20 Bible study | 48 Letters |
| 36 About women | |

For the benefit of Women of the ELCA participants, articles relating to Women of the ELCA mission areas are marked with these symbols **A** = action, **C** = community and **G** = growth.

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Freedom to be Yourself

Alene H. Moris

The revelation came to me in one of the letters I received weekly from my mother while I was living in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Amidst the usual news, one line jumped out at me. "Your Aunt Halldora in Iceland is now 94 years old," and then the critical part: "The women in our family do seem to live on and on!"

I did some quick mathematics. I was 39 years old that spring of 1967, living the very full life of pastor's wife, mother of four and teacher in a church-sponsored senior secondary school in a wonderful corner of the world. But, as I did my subtraction, I realized I might have 55 more years ahead of me. I was appalled.

Fifty-five years of what? I had already fulfilled the traditional script for women's lives. Where was the new cultural script? I tried to recall the older women I knew.

But there is no script, I realized. When I grew up the instruction book ended with, "Get some work skills in case you need them, get married, have children."

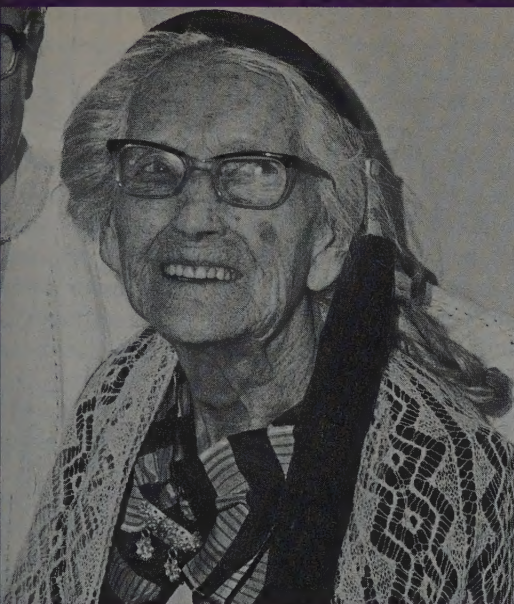
No wonder women often fear aging. While young women today are given almost too many options to consider, life after 50 is still experienced by many women as uncharted

territory, with no map. It is not surprising that many have simply followed the vague waiting style of the generations of women before them: helping out wherever needed, keeping busy day to day, not expecting a promotion at work or much that is new or exciting.

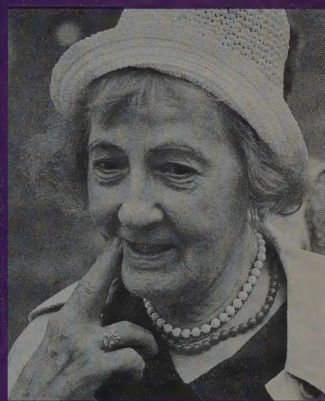
**Life after 50 is still
experienced by many
women as uncharted
territory, with no map.**

Some women, however, are beginning to recognize that the years after 50 provide an opportunity for freedom and creativity, perhaps more so than any other period in a woman's life. As these women talk to one another, they discover how different their reality is compared to the sometimes dismal mythology of the "older woman."

Contrary to published authorities, I doubt that too many women mourn the end of childbearing; the mourning often springs from the male mind. Most women, I believe, are simply relieved. Menopause does



The author's aunt, Halldora Bjarnadottir (above), lived to be over 100.



We are all on a journey of never-ending discovery.

not herald inevitable depression and loss of energy and libido (and hormonal therapy can benefit many who do experience such symptoms). Rather, many women are surprised to find that after menopause they can have a new kind of energy for their own growth.

After years of concentrating on other's needs and balancing complex family schedules, many women are hungry for time for themselves. As one woman of 58 said to me, "I am trying to recall the self I intended to be before I got diverted by all the female roles that I wanted to play."

She was not angry about playing these roles. She had on the whole enjoyed them. She was painfully

aware, however, that many of her dreams had been sidelined in the process. She felt that she had not fully discovered and used the special gifts God had given her. She felt a strong accountability for her blessings and saw the possibility of 20 more years of life as a remarkable opportunity to "do my own thing."

Making a conscious decision to create one's unique path takes courage at any stage of life but especially so when faced with the low expectations society often has for older people. Still, evidence is accumulating that the men and women who stay healthiest and happiest are those who have found a way to engage in their "lifework": continuing

something that has been part of their identity for years or beginning something completely new that had been waiting to be discovered and developed.

Doing one's own thing, or one's "lifework," requires a high level of self-awareness and self-understanding. For many women in their later years, the first task is to take themselves seriously enough to do the hard work of self-assessment. What do I most enjoy doing? What skills give me the greatest satisfaction? What untapped gift needs development?

Most important, each woman needs to know that she is needed in God's world. She needs to know that she was created for a work that won't be done, or won't be done as well, unless she does it. This can be work as personal as prayer, or as public as becoming a political advocate for the environment. It can be as nurturing as being the soup-maker at the shelter; it can be as individually rewarding as painting landscapes.

A lifework can be done as employment, or without any concern for money. It can be done five hours a week or 10 hours a day. But it does have to be seen by the woman herself as significant work that needs to be done. Busywork, or pastime work, does not create the vibrancy and vitality characteristic of a lifework.

The interesting thing about a lifework is its ability to create energy, energy that compensates for the natural slowing of the physical body that is characteristic of getting older. Many older women tell me how exciting it is to be totally absorbed in a loved work. For most of their lives,

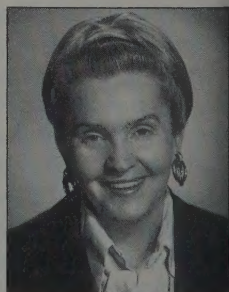
they thought of many things at once and did not have the opportunity to be completely focused.

To many Christian women, however, the pursuit of their own lifework can feel selfish. They are so accustomed to putting other people's needs first that they hardly know how to give themselves top priority, even for a part of each day or a few days a week. Many times they will only give themselves permission to do so after they realize that the kindest thing they can do for everyone in their lives is to stay as healthy and happy as possible.

Many young women today learn this lesson of self-respect much earlier. Their lessons in later life will be different; we are all on a journey of never-ending discovery. For most women experiencing their later years in the 1990s, however, the message to hear is: our lives are important; our talents and love are needed.

When we are fully engaged in life, getting older is simply a sign of God's grace; we still have work to do. Gratitude for each day becomes real as we sense the presence of the Holy Spirit infusing the day with purpose. ■

Alene H. Moris, Seattle, Washington, is a certified counselor who is founder and director of Sabah House, a residential counseling service for adults in career/life transition.



Becoming Wise Women

Julie Dennison

The middle-aged woman leading the Bible study on the Exodus at a homeless shelter suggested the residents act out the story from their own experiences. One group became the oppressive Pharaoh and the Egyptians, another the Israelites seeking liberation. A spontaneous and vigorous interchange culminated in a winging snake-dance through the sleeping rooms of the shelter to a reggae version of "Let My People Go."

One of the best things about getting older is loosening up and getting more real. Less preoccupied with vocational goals, raising a family, community obligations, and keeping up appearances, we older women can re-explore our faith and the meaning and purpose of life. We can take more risks to live life more fully in radical love. A friend once said, "When you get real, things happen!"

As we contend with daily irritations, struggle with relationships, confront the violence, racism, and injustice in the world, and encounter sickness and death, the challenge is not to let life wear us down—and not to give in to indifference or cynicism.

Rather, we continue to believe

that, as women created in the image of God, who we are and what we do matter. Trusting that God has chosen each one of us to "make things happen" strengthens our spirit of survival and allows us to overcome hopelessness and helplessness. "The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb [the Lord] named me" (Isaiah 49:1, New Revised Standard Version).

Getting older can mean becoming stronger and wiser. Feeling deeply our own pain and the pain of others helps us to be moved by the suffering of others and to respond naturally and spontaneously. Younger women need older women who are full of life and active in healing God's creation in order for them to look forward with enthusiasm to their own future.

The wisdom tradition in Scripture invites us to keep on growing ever wiser in the needs of the world and in the courage to respond. "Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? . . . For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 8:1,35, NRSV).

Wisdom literature encourages us to listen to the good sense of human experience. Reflecting on our own experience as women and that of

One of the best things about getting older is loosening up and getting more real.



other women, especially those who are poor and oppressed and those from other backgrounds, races and cultures, helps us "get wisdom" and "get real."

Getting real often softens sharp edges and replaces judgment with compassion. Mary, a widow with grown children, was planning a move to Florida when her friend Kay's son Tom died of AIDS. At the funeral she met many of Tom's friends and felt an instant rapport with them.

They invited both Mary and Kay to a support group for those who had lost loved ones to AIDS. To learn more, she read voraciously.

One of her new friends told her of the need for caretakers of AIDS babies; Mary volunteered. She delivered meals to shut-ins with AIDS, walked in the annual AIDS Chicago Walk that raised over a million dollars for direct care for people with AIDS, and has helped distribute bleach to addicts to sterilize their

eedles on the streets of Chicago. Mary has not yet moved to Florida, but she did speak there recently on AIDS awareness.

Getting real often reorders one's priorities. Four years ago I was on a heavy schedule as a parish pastor and full-time doctoral student. While writing a major paper, I thought I'd lost 15 pages on the computer. I reacted like a madwoman, pounding the floor and screaming, "Fifteen pages!" Eventually I retrieved the pages, but ultimately found I had lost the will to complete the program.

Getting real can mean getting in

Getting real often softens sharp edges and replaces judgment with compassion.

much with our feelings. Living only in my head in those days, I had lost the capacity to wail and thus to celebrate life. Now I cry and laugh more. A gesture of kindness or a smile of understanding moves me to the deepest gratitude. Violence, even in films, wrenches me. Now I feelches and pains never felt before, but also ineffable ecstasy.

Getting real can mean connecting with our bodies, too. My journey has led me to discover the power of healing touch through the study of traditional Eastern and Western therapies. This path led me most recently to volunteer at Genesis House, a refuge of hospitality and nurturing for women involved in prostitution. My gift is to offer them

healing touch through *shiatsu*, traditional Japanese massage. These women of courage offer me the gift of walking with them on their spiritual journey of getting real and becoming healers themselves.

To be accepted by women who "speak straight" touches me deeply. To eat in fellowship with women who not only have experienced abuse and rejection, but who face overwhelming obstacles in the struggle to change their lives, is both a humbling experience and a celebration.

When asked by some of the women why I came to Genesis House, I told them I didn't know. I seem to *know* less and less, but *feel* and *am thankful* more and more.

Perhaps to become a wise woman is to realize what women who have suffered deeply already know: That life is precious and fragile. That God has promised to be present in the midst of life—especially with those in pain, such as street people and prostitutes—bringing life out of death. That the invitation is to journey together and keep on "getting real." That things do happen. ■

Hopefully on her way to becoming a wise woman, 47-year-old Julie Dennison is director for international scholarships in the Division for Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Julie Dennison is married and the mother of four.



Lutheran camps, Elderhostels, ALOA and more . . .

Learning / in the Second Half of Life

Romania E. Cline

Old age is golden. Those of us in our upper years have so many things to take part in and learn from that we didn't have time for when we were raising a family and making a living. As maturing adults we want to stay as active as we can—not only to stay fit physically, but also mentally—for our “second half of life.”

Opportunities for older adults in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America include church camps and outdoor ministries, colleges and seminaries with continuing education offerings, and Elderhostels at a number of our church institutions. You may be surprised at the array of offerings in your area.

For instance, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of North Carolina has a unique travel ministry. Since 1985 bus travel has been offered to many historical and tourist sites, with Bible study included as part of the trip. As the program expanded, “fly-away” trips have been added.

Last August I joined the trip to Holden Village, a Lutheran camp in the state of Washington. Amid beautiful scenery we studied and discussed topics from the environment to theology. [See “Time Away,” April 1990 LWT, for more on Holden Village.]

From there we moved to the Canadian Rockies, where we held Sunday worship overlooking Lake Louise; rode down a dirt trail and saw a herd of wild elk; and had a mule deer eat out of our hands. It was awe-inspiring to see God's creation up close!

Many ELCA institutions offer Elderhostel programs, which link the European hosteling concept and Scandinavian folk schools. At Elderhostels, participants study college-level liberal arts or science courses offered by the host institution. Courses are not for credit. There is no homework or preparatory work. There are no exams or grades. Only an inquiring mind is needed. Classes are made up of all kinds of people—from those who never finished high school to those who hold high academic degrees.

A new pan-Lutheran organization for older Lutherans, the Association of Lutheran Older Adults (ALOA), offers more opportunities for involvement and enrichment. ALOA is an independent, voluntary association of Lutherans nearing or past 50 years of age which takes as its key words *celebrate* and *serve*. ALOA's purpose statement reads: “Sharing the gifts of our years in the



church and God's world." ALOA has received start-up funds from the Theat Ridge Foundation, the ELCA and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. To receive ALOA's free newsletter, write the Rev. Karl Nutze, Executive Director; ALOA; Valparaiso University; Valparaiso, IN 46383.

Church camps also offer fine study programs. In the Asheville area of North Carolina, where I live, more than a dozen church camps are nearby. The North Carolina Synod's Lutheridge/Lutherock Ministries, a camping and retreat center, is open year-round and offers programs and retreats for all ages.

I have spent six summers and four full years on staff at Lutheridge. As a dorm hostess, I've gotten to know many dear people. My life has been enriched a hundredfold.

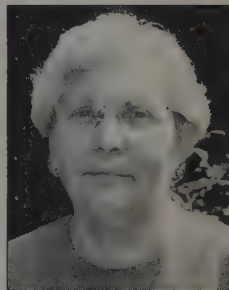
At Lutheridge/Lutherock I was asked to help with "A Gathering for Mothers," a program of the Lutheran Leaveness Association. [An article about the program for mothers appeared in the May 1989 LWT.] Being "sixtysomething" with no one

but me in my house, I wondered, "Why me?" I was told that I had a lot to offer, because I was a mother. In helping to plan and hostess the three-day retreat for young mothers I learned how rewarding sharing one's knowledge and expertise can be.

My own Women of the ELCA congregational unit offers retreats and Bible studies that deal with women's problems in today's world: working mothers, second families (grandchildren), careers, losing a mate, losing a child, empty nest, living alone, and more. The men's organization in my congregation offers similar programming.

The opportunities for learning are endless! The benefits to us are boundless! ■

Romania E. Cline, Arden, North Carolina, is a widow and mother of four. Throughout her life she has been involved in church work and activities.



A Single Grace

Susan K. Wendorf

My qualifications for writing this article are simple: I'm 46 years old, single since birth and quite happy, thank you.

Over the years, I've come to believe that people are single either by choice or by default. Those who *choose* singleness do so for a variety of reasons: professional career goals; desire for complete independence; dedication to a cause or belief; disillusionment after a failed relationship; or, as one woman told me years ago somewhat cynically, "I never met a man I couldn't live without!!"

Those who are single *by default* either were happily married and would like to be again; were unhappily married and would like to try again; or would like to be in a committed relationship but have not found one. Sometimes women who are single by default consider themselves "temporarily single."

Whether a woman is single by choice or by default, I believe that a woman can claim and celebrate her singleness. Claiming and celebrating singleness happens in a variety of ways, some within oneself (emotionally, psychologically, spiritually), some in one's external environment (living arrangements, friendships, use of free time).

The single women I know who are the happiest and most well-adjusted are those who take care of themselves as deliberately and intentionally as do the happiest and most well-adjusted married women I know. These single women nurture healthy relationships with other people. They strive to maintain a good balance among work, play, rest, and worship. They set reasonable boundaries to encourage their emotional maturity. They care for all their physical needs. They divide their time well between giving and receiving, neither self-focused to the point of "emotional constipation" nor altruistic to the point of exhaustion.

Conversely, I know women—both single and married—

who are frustrated, lonely, depressed and often angry precisely because they do *not* tend to their own needs and desires. They have somehow learned, or convinced themselves, that to do so is either selfish or unfeminine.

And too often the church reinforces those thoughts by assuming that single women have no needs the church cannot meet, by upholding the traditional family as the only truly ac-

ceptable lifestyle, and by reinforcing the image of single women in the church as "ladies in waiting"—women waiting to be married. The church has made some progress in this area, but it still has a long way to go in helping single women learn to value themselves as the whole persons they are.

The old adage "charity begins at home" applies to claiming and celebrating singleness. It begins when a woman is "at home" with her singleness, when she has freed herself of the pressure from society and/or family to marry, when she learns to enjoy the pleasure of her own company while reading or listening to music or going out to dinner alone.

But that's just the beginning. In my estimation, the "budding's proof" of the single woman's progress in this process comes down to some very practical lifestyle considerations.

Take housing, for example. In recent years, more and more single women are leaving rental units to claim the joys and responsibilities, the headaches and frustrations (not to mention the tax advantages) of home ownership. Many are buying into condominium arrangements, claiming what they see as the best of both worlds: the privacy



Patterns of cooking and eating can be indications of whether or not a single woman has claimed, and can celebrate, her own life.

and independence of ownership, and the freedom from extensive yard work and household maintenance.

Of course, many single women rent their living space: an apartment, a duplex, even an entire house. There's nothing wrong with renting, unless the single woman rents because she sees her estate as permanently temporary.

"Permanently temporary" sounds like a contradiction in terms, but the term brings to mind single women who have gone to their grave longing to be married. Their entire lives have slipped past them while they searched first for "Mr. Right," then for "Mr. Pretty Good," and finally for "Mr. Anybody."

They declined to purchase anything of beauty or durability for themselves, even when they could afford it, always waiting for the day they would be awash in wedding gifts. On that day china would replace the melmac, sterling the stainless, and crystal the gas-station giveaway. But that day never came, and all of life was "permanently temporary."

Even patterns of cooking and eating can be indications of whether or not a single woman has claimed, and can celebrate, her own life. I happen to enjoy cooking, and I have no problem adapting favorite family recipes (there were six of us in the Wendorf household) to my needs as a single woman. With today's food packaging and variety of food markets, as well as freezers, microwaves, small grills, and appliances, I don't buy the notion that it's impossible to cook for just one person.

My strong suspicion is that the single woman who survives on frozen dinners consumed while standing at the kitchen counter is a woman who hasn't learned to claim and celebrate her singleness.

We place value on ourselves in so many ways: income, education, employment and, too often, marital status. But for single women, some of the practical ways in which we order our lives can be very revealing in terms of how we value our lives. There are special joys and opportunities available to single women . . . if only we can learn to claim and celebrate our singleness! ■

Susan K. Wendorf, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has served in parish and campus ministry for 20 years, first as a deaconess, then as an ordained pastor. Currently on leave from call in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, she is a paralegal and free-lance writer. She's been claiming and celebrating singleness since about 1970.



Return to Singleness:

Alone or Lonely?

Carolyn J. Kilday

Death or divorce; sudden or gradual; by choice or by circumstance—a return to singleness may come about in many different ways. Responses to becoming single again are just as varied, including grief and gratitude; feelings of liberation and isolation; a sense of ending, and of beginning. Yet there are some common threads, which may be seen in the stories below.

For most of the years of her marriage Ellen felt locked into a life of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse. With several children, low self-esteem, and few discernible employment skills, Ellen believed her husband when he said he would quit his job if she ever left him, leaving her and the children with no financial resources. So she stayed. Through volunteer work in her church and community, and with the encouragement and support of others, Ellen grew stronger. Eventually she sought out further training and education that she hoped would help her to contribute more to the marriage and the children. However, she came to realize that her life would not change unless she changed it. At the age of 40, she ended the marriage. Ellen gave up her rights to any share in her ex-husband's pension. She received custody of the two minor children, moderate support for them, one-half of the proceeds of the sale of their home and responsibility for most of their outstanding debts.

Karen and her husband had two sons. In addition to being the primary caretaker of the children, Karen

contributed her skills and energy toward David's successful climb up the corporate ladder. In the year following the tragic illness and death of their eldest son, David told Karen he was leaving her. He wanted to marry someone else.

At 42, Karen received custody of their son along with moderate child support and a small, temporary maintenance for herself.

Phyllis did not work outside the home during her marriage to John. Instead she put her energies into raising their six children. When she was nearing 50, John suffered a fatal heart attack. Phyllis was left with four minor children, an insurance settlement, a mortgaged home, a monthly stipend from John's pension plan and minimal experience in handling finances.

Esther and Arthur planned a quiet, comfortable retirement. They had lived a traditional, no-nonsense life as a hardworking couple who raised two children and paid off their mortgage. Arthur died suddenly only eight months after his retirement, and Esther was overwhelmed by her added responsibilities.

Although Esther had always thought of herself as self-sufficient, she realized she would need to learn to do the things that Arthur had always taken care of. And what's more—when she'd admit it to herself and others—she somehow felt cheated out of the life she and Arthur had planned for their retirement years together.

Today Ellen, Karen, Phyllis, and Esther have all been on their own for more than 10 years. None of them has remarried. What has life been like for them during these years of "mature singleness"?

They all recall feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and loss. Those feelings were not always directed at the absent spouse but sometimes toward friends, families, and members of their congregations who seemed to be disapproving or who remained silent. Whether the perceived lack of support was simply the inability of others to express their concern or whether it was a reflection of disapproval, the women felt it as a significant additional loss.

Ellen remembers the pain of attending the church where she had been so active, and seeing people avert their eyes. She says it made her feel as though she was

wrong for ending the marriage. Her family had little to say; her friends were her main source of support.

Karen had no living relatives other than her son, but she found strong support within her congregation and continued to involve herself in church-related activities.

Phyllis had long before severed her church ties, and she found that she had neglected her friendships also. She is grateful that her children and her siblings stood with her.

Esther received support from her family, her friends and her congregation. "But," she says, "it often felt as though I was looked upon as one half of an entity, rather than as a whole person."

While all of the women felt some anger at having to make a drastic change in lives they had planned differently, they all felt more fear about how they would manage. Their fears were focused primarily on finances.

Ellen has had ups and downs in employment but today holds a professional position that seems secure.

Karen found a position as a staff person in a service agency. Her earnings are low, but she has some security and some job satisfaction.

Phyllis did not seek employment until all her children had left home. She then found work as a live-in personal companion. She is now retired with no pension and limited Social Security, and lives in low-income elderly housing.

While **Esther** is the most financially secure of the women, she worries about her ability to live independently and about rising health-care costs.

Although these four women do not represent all women who have returned to a single life, their feelings and experiences do speak for the feelings and experiences of many of their sisters in similar circumstances. What do they miss? What do they wish for? What do they worry about?

They miss the companionship, the simple blessing of having someone around to talk to. That loss was felt more

deeply as their children left home. They sometimes resent the fact that there is no one around with whom to share the daily chores, go shopping, unpack the car, prepare a meal. And they wish such a person was with them. They worry about growing older alone, about getting a sufficient pension, about staying in good health, about social contacts, about balance in their lives.

And what do they find pleasurable and satisfying about life as a single person after life in tandem? They continue to enjoy their children and grandchildren. They no longer worry about pleasing or displeasing a spouse. They enjoy the freedom to make their own decisions about whom they will see and what they will do. And, when they stop to think about it, they are proud of what they have accomplished on their own.

They have survived, they have managed their own finances. Out of necessity they have developed skills—from leadership to car maintenance. They have discovered their own strengths.

And they are grateful: grateful to have friends and family who support their accomplishments, who understand their difficulties, and who are present for them. They are grateful for congregations that have made room for single adults and that have broken free from stereotypical images; for church-related social groups that have, as a sign of their inclusiveness, shed the names “Fifth Wheel” or “Pairs and Spares.” They are grateful for opportunities to form new and strong friendships with other women. And those women who continue to express an active faith in God are especially grateful that their faith has sustained and strengthened them through their most difficult moments.

Ellen, Karen, Phyllis, and Esther expect to remain single; to be alone. But they know that they do not have to be lonely. ■

Carolyn J. Kilday is executive director, Kenosha County (Wisconsin) Girl Scout Council. She formerly worked on the staff of Lutheran Church Women and the Division for Mission in North America, in the Lutheran Church in America.



Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

◆ LWF plays role in Guatemalan peace process

ever since 1990, when the Lutheran World Federation sponsored a meeting of representatives from the government's army and the guerrillas involved in Guatemala's 31-year war, the LWF has played a role in Guatemalan peace negotiations. The ELCA is a member church of the LWF, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland. The LWF continues to take an active interest and play a role in negotiations that occur in several areas of the world.

Bless the peacemakers, O God.

◆ NCC delegation seeks Korean reunification

Church leaders and Asia specialists who held high-level conversations with both North and South Korea have agreed to press their governments to tear down cold-war barriers in Korea. A 16-person delegation, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, included the Rev. Hank Rench of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division for Global Mission. The group attended a conference in Seoul to develop strategies for a reunification to end the separation of some 10 million persons from members of their families.

Break down the walls that divide us, O God of unity.

◆ Volunteers offer services to those who are housebound

The Lutheran Home at Topton [Pennsylvania] designed a copyrighted program to allow members of congregations to provide volunteer services for people needing short-term care at home. Through Volunteer Home Care, people can help with anything from letter-writing to providing transportation for medical appointments.

Thank you, God of all goodness, for willing hands and hearts to serve as volunteers in many capacities.

◆ ELCA men urged to help young males

The new president of Lutheran Men in Mission, Charles Bruning, is promoting mentoring relationships between LMM members and younger males. "Males are having to look at some new kinds of interactions—some new kinds of relationships—because of the feminist movement," he said. Men are challenged to look at themselves "in their work settings, in their family relationships and in their friendships."

O God, bless men and women who search for new ways of relating.

Remember to add to your prayer list people and issues in the news. ■

Sonia C. Groenewold is senior news editor of The Lutheran.

Session 2

The Surprising Message of the Cross

Mary E.F. Albing

Study Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:10

Biblical Basis: 1 Corinthians 1:18–3:4

Memory Verse

"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

1 Corinthians 1:18

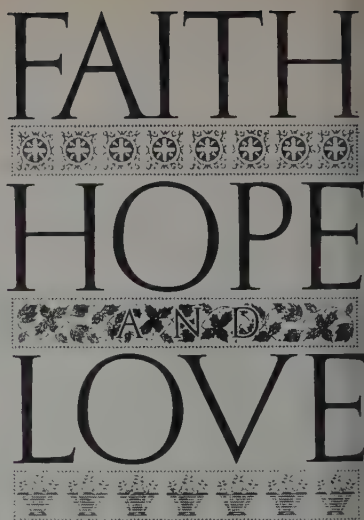
Overview

In this session we will look at Paul's explanation of how the message of the cross gathers believers. With their wisdom and set ideas about God, the Jews and the Greeks of Paul's day made themselves authorities on God's interactions with humankind. When God did not act in the ways they expected, Jesus was crucified.

Paul stresses how God turns all expectations upside down. God molds heavenly signs and earthly wisdom into the Word made flesh, the crucified Christ.

Opening

O God, help us to remember that because of the cross, we need not look far away to find you. We may feel at times that you have forsaken us, that you are far away. At those times you come to us who are suffering,



...taking hold of our hearts and comforting us
with your compassionate presence. Come to
us now, in your name we pray. Amen.

Understanding the Word

The Search for God

The congregation at Corinth was made up predominantly of Gentile Christians, though there were probably a few Jewish Christians as well. Keeping their cultural and religious backgrounds in mind, Paul develops the message of Christ crucified in terms the congregation in Corinth could understand.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-19, noting the use of the words *polishness* and *wisdom*. Throughout Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, it is apparent that those in Corinth valued wisdom. In fact, because of their knowledge, members of the Corinthian congregation felt they were beyond the message of the cross.



1

Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 to remind the Corinthians of God's feelings toward human wisdom. What is wisdom? What is discernment? How might they get in the way of our relationship with God?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-25. In these verses, Paul reminds his readers of the one qualification needed to become part of God's kingdom.

2

According to verse 21, who will be saved?

Signs and Wisdom

Paul's words in this text must have come as a surprise to the Jews and Greeks in the Corinthian congregation. The Jews had always searched for God in signs sent through special messengers. When the Israelites made some claim about God, the people would believe it to be God's word if a sign was performed.

One example of a person who performed signs is Moses. **Read**

Exodus 4:1-5. Moses was given a special sign so the Israelites would believe God had appeared to him.

The Greek philosophers also searched for God. They believed they would find God through perfect, rational wisdom. In fact, the Greeks worked for perfection in all things, including mathematics and art, so that they could be closer to God.

The Jews and Greeks had certain human expectations that were not met in the cross. God's way was not what they had anticipated. Jesus was more than a messenger—he was God's own son. Yet this son was stripped and beaten until he was too weak to carry his own cross. Then he was nailed to a cross, battered and bleeding, until he died of exhaustion and asphyxiation.

3

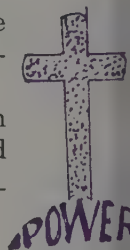
According to 1 Corinthians 1:23, why is the crucified Christ "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"?

God's Power and Wisdom

For the Jews and the Greeks, the idea of the cross being a sign of God's power and wisdom itself was an offense. Because the Jews attached a curse to dying on a cross, they insisted on crucifixions being carried out beyond the city walls.

The sign of the cross was not at all what the Jews expected. They expected a sign of power, one that befitted a powerful messiah. Instead, they received a sign of weakness that made God look weak. The Jews were looking for a triumphant messiah—not a crucified one.

For the Greeks, the cross was an affront because it was such an illogical place for God to meet humanity. The idea that God would appear in vulnerable human form to die the most degrading form of death made no sense.



4

Paul says God has turned all the expectations of the Jews and Greeks upside down so that Christ is the power and the wisdom of God. In verse 25, what does Paul say about human wisdom and strength?

Beyond Worldly Views

Read 1:26—2:5. Paul gives two examples to explain this difficult message. One might expect God's chosen people to be the outwardly powerful of the world. Instead, Paul points out that the people of God, including the Corinthians, were not considered wise or powerful by human standards.

5

In verse 31, Paul quotes from the book of Jeremiah. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. According to these verses, how do common goals of humanity—wisdom, power, and wealth—compare with the knowledge of God? In what are we to boast?

A second example of God's wisdom and power is that Paul comes to the Corinthians, by his own admission, "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (2:3-4). Yet, amazingly, the people believe Paul's word and in the source of his power!

6

According to 2:5, in what will the Corinthian congregation's faith rest? How does faith allow us to see beyond what the world views as weakness and foolishness?

Read verses 6-10. While Paul rejects a Christianity characterized by worldly wisdom, he does claim a true wisdom.

7

Verses 6-10 describe a "secret and hidden" wisdom that has not been understood by those doomed to perish. Why is it obvious that the rulers of Paul's day did not have this wisdom?

Interpreting the Word

In God's Grasp

God's surprising love for us and all humankind is demonstrated throughout Scripture. Though God often surprised the Israelites with acts of grace and love coming in unexpected ways, these acts are consistent with God's wisdom and love for those who believe.

Remember the Old Testament stories about Sarah and Joseph? In Genesis Chapters 12–23 we learn the story of Sarah and her husband, Abraham, who were promised descendants as numerous as the stars. But Sarah was an old woman before God gave her Isaac, the child promised to her and Abraham.

Sarah was so surprised by the way God chose to act, and so happy about her child, that she laughed. According to Genesis 21:6, "Now Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.'"

Genesis Chapters 37–50 tells the surprising story of Joseph, the favored—even spoiled—child of Jacob, one of the patriarchs of Israel. His brothers, in a jealous rage, threw him in a well, and he was carried off by slave traders to Egypt. It seemed Joseph's life had ended.

But God had grasped Joseph firmly. Though the young man was sold into slavery, God used him in an unexpected way to save many people. Joseph became a powerful adviser to Egypt's Pharaoh, and, by careful planning, Joseph provided food for many people during a time of drought and famine.

Joseph helps his brothers understand God's surprising love and power when he says, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good . . ." (50:20).

8

In these two stories, how do God's actions go beyond human understanding? How is the message of the crucified Christ similar to these stories?

The Power of the Cross

The message of the cross destroys every expectation about God. It says something amazing about our Creator: If God meets us at the cross and if God is all-powerful, then God's power is found in weakness.



Danish writer and theologian Søren Kierkegaard tells the story of a king who fell in love with a beautiful maiden. Because he was a common serving girl, he was in a quandary.

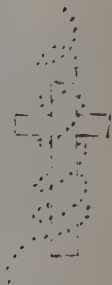
If he swept the lowly maiden off her feet, she would almost certainly go with him. She would be afraid to do anything else. After all, he was king!

Or perhaps she would not be able to pass up the lure of the riches and glory of being queen. In either case, he would never know if she loved him or not.

If he only pretended to become a poor person and somehow convinced the maiden to fall in love with him, the maiden would eventually find out and might come to despise him for his deception. Yet if he gave up his throne, he would risk all. What if the maiden did not love him?

The king desperately loved the maiden and risked all—even her love. He gave up his crown for her love and became a servant.

Like the king in this parable, God's power is hidden in sacrifice. Though we cannot fully comprehend it, in the cross and in Jesus' death, God's love is made known to us.



9

Why do you think God chose to accomplish salvation through the cross, rather than by a powerful sign or by our intellectual understanding? How might you explain why you think Christ was crucified? Why did God have to die?

But even when we think we know the answer to the mystery that is God, even when we understand that God's wisdom looks like foolishness and God's power looks like weakness, even when we think we have a grasp of the message of Christ crucified, we still must deal with Jesus.

This Jesus—the man who died, was buried, and rose again—is the God we follow, the one who expects the same of us. God in human flesh is Jesus, the one who gave up everything so that we can have victory over death and share in Christ's glory.

And we, as followers of Christ, must die to ourselves as well. We first die to all that we would claim to have or know, all the power and wisdom that we believe we have.

Living the Word

The Wonder of God's Wisdom

Paul used the Corinthians as an example of the surprising way that God works in the world (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). People today have many of the same questions about Christians and their "foolish and weak" ways in the world as they did in Paul's time.

10

By the world's standards, Paul and the members of the congregation in Corinth were not considered wise or powerful, nor was their God. What does our culture or world perceive as powerful today? How is God's power revealed on earth today?

Loan Nguyen was a refugee from Vietnam. She and her family were resettled by a small congregation that furnished an apartment; paid the rent for six months; and helped Loan Nguyen and her family find jobs, medical help, and English classes.

The congregation's generosity to a stranger was a powerful witness to Loan Nguyen, who had previously known only oppression and poverty.

Loan Nguyen became a Christian one year after immigrating. Some time later, when she was asked about the experience of coming to this country, she confided that she had been surprised by the generosity of the people she met. She had also been somewhat suspicious. She kept waiting for them to tell her what they expected in return for all their gifts. She even thought her new Christian friends were somewhat naive. They gave and gave and expected nothing in return. Finally, she came to see God's love in her Christian friends. Now Loan Nguyen says God surprised her three times: by giving her freedom, by giving her Christian friends, and by giving her life with Christ.



11

Think about the experiences of Loan Nguyen. An outsider might see Christian service as foolish, something people take advantage of.

What are some of the seemingly "foolish" ways you or your congregation do ministry in your community?

The realization that we have not grasped God, but that God has grasped us, turns our thinking upside down. This surprising God has gathered a surprising people.

12

Name an old way that you used to think about God, which was turned upside down by some life experience. Finish the statement: "I used to think _____"

Now I think _____"

Looking Ahead

Session 3, "Laying the Foundation," deals with the leaders of the community gathered under the cross. In the church of Christ, the source of leadership is God, and faithful leaders are loving, trustworthy and accountable for their work.

In preparation for the study, consider learning the memory verse: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). ■

The Rev. Mary Albing is pastor of United Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where she and her husband, Bob, share a position.

Faith, Hope, and Love: A Study of 1 Corinthians was prepared by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America under the direction of Karen Battle, director for educational resources. Associate editor: Liv Rosin. Copyright © 1993 Augsburg Fortress. May not be reproduced without permission.

Any comments or questions relating to the Bible study should be sent to the Rev. Karen Battle, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189.

Gumption

Is an Old-Fashioned Word

Mary Vaughn Armstrong

"Mr. Prater's wife died two years ago," my Scotch-Irish mother told us. "He's raising those four children by himself. That takes gumption."

Just by her tone of voice we knew that Mr. Prater had uncommon backbone and would somehow prevail despite great odds. When mom used the word *gumption*, which wasn't often, her voice took on a special ring of admiration.

I hardly ever hear that funny word anymore, but it came to have enduring meaning for me in my 17th summer. I'd grown up in a medical family and wanted to be a nurse like my mother. Before I was 10, I was dressing and undressing over a dozen stuffed bears and dolls daily, fixing a bed for each and administering their imaginary medicines. Later I kept a notebook of medical terms, carefully spelled out and defined by my doctor father, including odd bits of information such as "the four symptoms of pellagra."

But this summer was different. Gently and firmly my parents told me, "You need to find out how you really feel about nursing. You need to separate the dream from the reality."

So with their wholehearted encouragement, I became a nurse's aide at our local hospital. I plunged into work on the wards after three days of classroom orientation, and in the months that followed helped with everything from bed baths to after-death care.

As my senior year in high school approached, I knew I had to make up my mind about nurse's training. Aiming for nursing school would mean more science and math courses, applications to complete, examinations to pass. It was a crucial decision for me, and help in making it came in an unexpected way.

One morning in late August, as I was coming to the end

When mom used the word *gumption*, which wasn't often, her voice took on a special ring of admiration.

of my summer job, I got up at 5:30 as usual, dressed and hurried into our silent kitchen for a fast breakfast. There I found a small note on the kitchen counter, written in my mother's hand. Picking it up, I read in the pale morning light, "Dear Mary, I am very proud of you. You have a lot of gumption. Love, Mom."

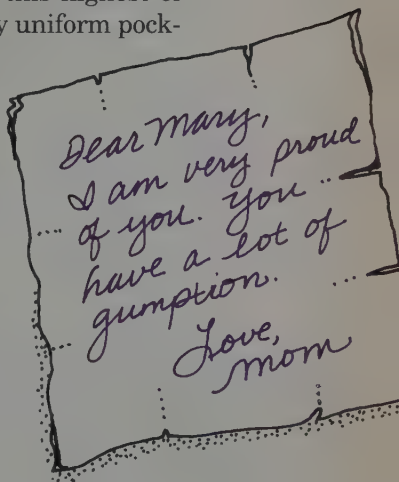
My heart soared as I read and reread this highest of praise from my mother. I slipped it into my uniform pocket, and have kept it to this day. Her words gave wings to my resolve, and that September I returned eagerly to high school and those seemingly endless science courses. Five years later, as I became a registered nurse, my parents sat in the middle of the second row, smiling at me.

I've saved many notes and letters from mom and dad, but that one meant the most. Though tiny in size and the words few, it bonded me to those women in my family who had lived many years before. They were women of strong character and few words, and mom's note was a generational link telling me I was one of them.

Next to my faith in the goodness of God, knowing the depth of my mother's belief in me became an anchoring rock. I read mom's note late at night for comfort as I struggled through a wrenching divorce. I read it months later for direction, during the long and lonely process of rediscovering my muddled identity. I read it for strength as I nursed my five-year-old son, terminally ill with leukemia. And on the eve of my wedding to Bob almost 22 years ago, I read it for pure joy.

By her personal example and those carefully chosen words, my mother placed in my hand a torch of encouragement and self-confidence that refuses to go out. And as I've searched for fresh ways to convey to our four children that same message of faith, nothing ever says it better than mom's old-fashioned words, "You have a lot of gumption." ■

Mary Vaughn Armstrong, Spokane, Washington, is an author, retreat leader and workshop speaker. Her books, all published by David C. Cook, include Caring for Your Loved Ones (1990), Quiet Moments for Parents and Other Caregivers (1992) and Golden Gate Morning (1992).



"I Found Snuffles"

Gretchen E. Daum

Four summers ago, my godchild Kristen's father announced that the family

would be moving from South Carolina to south Florida, where he would be serving a new pastorate. I decided that I wanted to give Kristen something that would keep us connected, despite the distance.

I had known Kristen since she was 20 minutes old; the move came a month before her third birthday. I found her gift: a soft, cuddly stuffed animal that had the name "Snuffles" on the colorful tag around its neck.

In the four years since then I've often been amused and touched when Kristen has come to the phone and said, "Guess what, I still have Snuffles!" One time she reported, "Snuffles was in the washing machine."

"Oh no!" I feigned alarm. "What happened?"

"Oh, he just got really dirty and mama figured he should have a bath in the washing machine."

It's funny how you can get carried away long-distance with a little girl, in frivolous chatter about her stuffed

toy. But I don't really see it as frivolous, not when a little pink creature helps a young child remember that someone far away cares about her life and the things important to her. Connections matter.

And now a monster hurricane has nearly shattered Kristen's world in Miami, and the worlds of those around her. Their lives have been spared, but the pieces are so difficult to pick up.

The evening after Hurricane Andrew hit, a friend of Kristen's family called to tell us that everyone was safe; they were surrounded,

A little pink creature helps a young child remember that someone far away cares about her life. Connections matter.

however, by devastation so massive that it was difficult for them to comprehend. I spent the next five days trying to connect again, watching the frightening scenes on news reports and repeatedly dialing phone numbers that wouldn't work. Fi-



Kristen and Snuffles in front of her hurricane-damaged home.

ally, six days after the hurricane, Kristen's father called. He was standing in their kitchen, he said, watching rain from leaks in the roof drip down the walls of the house. He was able to talk for only a short time before a curfew took effect; they needed to return to the church, where they were staying temporarily, along with several other uprooted church members.

After updating me on the conditions and sharing the pain and horror of their experience, he put Kristen on the phone. Like most adults, I worry about the long-term effect that post-disaster trauma is having on the thousands of children in South Florida and Louisiana. Children like Kristen may be too young to understand fully the inexplicable ways of hurricanes, tornadoes and other disasters, but they are old enough to

experience the horrific fears, confusion and anxiety that come in the aftermath.

But it seemed that Kristen wasn't really worrying about those things as much as she was just searching for connections in a house in disarray.

"Hi," she said shyly into the phone, and her voice sounded as though she'd had to grow up a little faster all of a sudden. As though she was uncertain about things in her world-now-turned-upside-down.

"I found Snuffles," she said quietly.

Gone was the "I still have Snuffles!" giggly refrain I'd become accustomed to these four years. Kristen has learned something we all need to learn in life—that sometimes it means much, much more just to *find* your connections, or rediscover them, than to possess them or take them for granted.

"I'm so glad you found Snuffles," I told Kristen. "Now, how about you take him back with you to the church. . . ."

"That's what I'm thinking about doing," she said.

I don't know how long "Snuffles the stuffed toy" will mean something to Kristen. But "Snuffles the connection," I hope, will help heal a little of the hurt. "Snuffles the connection," I hope, will never leave her. ■

Gretchen E. Daum is a free-lance writer from Columbia, South Carolina. Kristen's family is living in a donated mobile home while their house is being repaired.

Gloria Weber: Advocate and Activist

Robin R. Mueller

The Rev. Gloria Weber, a St. Louis native, has led at least four lives—public-school teacher, “pioneer” woman pastor, mental-health counselor and local leader in the Older Women’s League. She’s now embarking on a fifth, having been elected a representative to the Missouri state legislature in November.

She describes herself as a “social activist.” “I believe in putting God into actions rather than words. I believe we should be public advocates rather than private pray-ers.”

Before Desert Storm was launched, Weber advocated for peace by calling for a press conference and mobilizing support. “The churches were filled with people asking God to do something. I want and ask God to work through me and use me. You need to lead people in what needs to be done. And you know what needs to be done because that comes from your faith.”

Weber’s faith grew at her congregation, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod parish. Besides school teaching and rearing four children with her husband, John, she volunteered as an assistant organizer and Sunday school, midweek and Bethel Bible series teacher. She attended classes at Concordia Semi-



nary “for my own enlightenment.”

When the American Lutheran Church voted to ordain women, Weber transferred to Eden Theological Seminary and joined Bethany Lutheran Church in Webster Groves, an ALC parish.

Weber earned her master of education degree in 1972 and her master of divinity in 1974. “I did feel like a pioneer and had a lot of fun—at first,” Weber recounts. “I had debates about women’s ordination with my former professors. From the second year on, it was not pleasant, although I got a lot of support from my new congregation. I was the only woman pastor in St. Louis for 10 years.”

She served as assistant pastor at St. Luke (ALC) in 1974-75 and at

Holy Cross (Lutheran Church in America) from 1976-78. "I was a good preacher and counselor, and I enjoyed those two roles the most," she assesses herself. However, after her children missed her terribly during one grueling Christmas schedule, they announced, "This isn't working."

Weber enrolled in a clinical pastoral education course at a state hospital and later became a mental-health counselor at Lutheran Family and Children's Services in 1979. She "retired" in 1987.

In 1988, she discovered the Older Women's League. "It was made for me," she says.



After attending the White House Conference on Aging in 1980, two veterans of the "displaced homemaker" movement chartered the non-profit, non-par-

tisan league "to raise the image and status of mid-life and older women."

Members are "anyone who is 49 or hopes to be, and anyone who loves an older woman," explains Weber.

OWL's 20,000 members are in 20 chapters in 37 states. Members sponsor bills and work for their passage by testifying at hearings, traveling to state capitols, educating and organizing grass-roots support. They advocate universal health care, social security equity, ending age discrimination in the workplace, stay-

ing in control to the end of life, expanded employer-sponsored pension coverage and improved housing.

Weber has been membership chair, vice-president and president, and is now executive director of the St. Louis chapter, where the membership has grown from 22 to more than 400 since 1988. She edits the chapter newsletter, *OWLs in Flight*. "Serving in public office and confronting issues is a very fulfilling ministry, more so than in the parish. There's much more freedom," Weber says unabashedly. "My faith came into its own after I worked outside the church. Working only with Lutherans pales in comparison to working with people of different faiths and with no faith."

"A young woman today should seek a place of independence, to learn, to grow, to do her own thing and to make a difference. She has more power, talents and intellect than she thinks she has. And God wants every person to develop those to their highest extent."

For more information about the Older Women's League, call 1-800-TAKE-OWL (1-800-825-3695) or write OWL, 666 11th St. N.W., Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20001. ■

Robin R. Mueller, House Springs, Missouri, owns and operates Write Direction, a communications firm.



Like Mother, Like Daughter

"When are you coming?"

"On Sunday, why?"

"Because I want to get
some things, make the bed . . ."

"Oh, Mom," she said.

I felt an echo in me:

I had made the bed
just the week before on a visit to
my mother's,

because of her back.

Always before she had,
but now I did, knowing
where everything was:
I had moved her there.

Looking for recipes
of dishes my daughter likes,
I found the ones for meals
I had made my mother,
in her new kitchen,
and put them away
like an echo in a drawer.

Reviewing their ways,
looking for similarities
in their rhythms
(there were none);
I weighed them against
my need to be alone.



I am related to neither now
(their blue eyes are so dissimilar)
and yet I am their link.
There are echoes back
and forth through me:
I live alone, as do
my mother and my daughter,
none of us in the house
where we were raised or
spent our marriages.
Each of us is careful
of the others, unyielding
in small significant ways.

I now mother my mother
when I can no longer
mother my daughter
who is older than I
have ever felt myself to be.

Susan Jacobson

Copyright © 1986 Susan Jacobson, from *When I Am an Old Woman I Shall Wear Purple* (Papier-Mache Press, 1987). Used by permission of Susan Jacobson.

Warning



When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practise a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

Jenny Joseph

From *Selected Poems* published by Bloodaxe Books, Ltd., copyright © 1992 Jenny Joseph.
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Addie Wilkins

Addie Wilkins salts her conversation with the word *aspired*. She aspired to work for her church . . . to raise her children well . . . to finish her degree in social work, "where my heart is." God transformed her aspirations into actions and achievements.

After 30 years of church work, Addie Wilkins graduated from Valparaiso (Indiana) University's deaconess program in 1989. Today she coordinates social ministry and outreach for four inner-city St. Louis churches. She organizes food pantries, visits shelters, counsels single mothers, advocates with utility companies, assists those facing eviction and ministers to the homeless. Her energy and resources touch about 250 families weekly.

"I say, 'You feel the chair you're sitting in? I've sat there.'" Addie Wilkins, now 59, grew up in rural Paris, Tennessee, a farmer's daughter, and one of 10 children of fourth-generation Christian Methodist Episcopal pastors.

After graduating from high school, Addie helped an ailing aunt in St. Louis. She married and soon had five children, including a set of twins. When her oldest child was 4, she separated from her abusive and alcoholic husband. They divorced in 1963.

"It was a blow to my life, to come from a loving family and to face



divorce," Wilkins says. She lived in the infamous Pruitt-Igoe housing projects that were later destroyed. "I had to apply for government assistance," she remembers. "I'd cry and say, 'You make me feel like I'm nobody. But I know who I am and God knows who I am.'"

Addie Wilkins credits the former All Nations Lutheran Church (which later merged with Transfiguration) as "my support, strength and source of my mentors." After her confirmation at All Nations in 1963, she taught Sunday school, made evangelism calls and served on every program board.

"My hope is for the poor to be self-sustaining and self-sufficient. But our system sets them up for failure," says Wilkins. "I believe and tell them, 'God will give you the strength to overcome obstacles. He did for me. If you have him, you have everything.'" ■

Robin Mueller
House Springs, Missouri

Dorothy S. Wise

Dorothy Simpson Wise, better known as Dot, has a sense of humor about her years. "Age was never important until this year when someone said, 'I think it's wonderful what you do at your age,' and then it dawned on me," she says with a smile.

Dot Wise was elected president of South Carolina Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America last summer. Presiding at her first synodical women's organization board meeting, she led the group through a review of the three mission areas: Growth, Community and Action; the setting of goals and objectives; and the development of a plan of action. Those of us in attendance realized our new president not only bubbled with energy and enthusiasm, but clearly possessed vision and direction—an empowering combination of gifts.

For Dot, leadership began at age 12, when she was called to do a Bible study for a church youth meeting. She recalls mispronouncing a word and vowing never again to speak before a group. Yet, in 1939, her Erskine College graduating class voted her "best speaker."

A member of the Lutheran church for 51 years, Dot Wise has witnessed the transition of the women's organization from United Lutheran Church Women (ULCW) to Lutheran Church Women (LCW) to



Women of the ELCA. She has performed most every task, including kitchen duty and serving on the synod council's committee on discipline.

In 1974, at age 57, she and husband Bill, then 61, pulled up roots and lived on a naval base in the Bahamas for two years. For Dot, it was a two-year respite from a hectic pace as guidance counselor and director of student activities at Greenwood High School.

Sadness and grief have not been absent from Dorothy's life. "We have had downs, but there has always been hope," she says. She was told by a doctor in 1988 that she had breast cancer. A five-year-old grandson died as a result of a head injury. "But God has blessed me in so many ways, and when you have faith, you make it."

After 74 years, Dorothy Wise continues to make good her claim that "as long as the Lord blesses me with good health, I'll keep going." ■

Sandy Olson

White Rock, South Carolina

Lily M. Gyldenvand

As a young girl in La Moure, North Dakota, Lily Gyldenvand dreamed of writing and of attending Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. So, after earning \$25 for teaching vacation Bible school in a rural church, she set out for Concordia. With the help of her brothers and sisters, and by her own hard work, she made one of her dreams come true.

Upon graduation she began her lifelong service to the church. She was secretary in the department of education (which included college, seminary and parish education) in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. To pay some college debts, she took a brief detour from her church occupations to work in the Minneapolis Grain Exchange.

Then she returned to work at the Secretary's office in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In all of her work she had opportunities to write; and, as president of the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation, a young women's organization, she regularly wrote articles for their magazine.

Lily Gyldenvand's dream of writing and editing really came true in the early 60s, when three women's organizations merged to form the American Lutheran Church Women. She was asked to edit their three magazines, gradually merging them into what became *Scope* magazine. She gladly accepted the challenge



and once laughingly said she felt guilty being paid for doing something she enjoyed so much.

Gyl, as her friends call her, loved words and played with them as a pianist plays with notes. She had a talent for encouraging people who had something to share to write it down—whether or not they had writing skills. She would then carefully reshape what they wanted to say, crafting it into an artistic piece.

A popular speaker at conventions, Gyl was known for her refreshing sense of humor. She gladly shared her faith and spiritual insights in *Scope* editorials, which were an inspiration to many.

Upon her retirement, the women of the American Lutheran Church honored her by establishing a chair in journalism at her alma mater. In 1975 Concordia had recognized her service to the church by awarding her an honorary doctorate.

In recent years Lily Gyldenvand has developed Alzheimer's disease. She now resides at Lyngblomsten Care Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. ■

*Alida H. Storaasli
St. Paul, Minnesota*

Eva Savolainen

Eva Savolainen is a single mother, student, and volunteer involved in her congregation, synod and community, as well as in churchwide activities. Far from pleading overwork, she says, "I am very delighted to serve. . . . I hope that the opportunity to be of help continues and that I will be able to serve in any capacity I am needed."

Eva Savolainen "walks her talk"—another way of saying she practices what she preaches. Born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, she moved to Chicago in 1966. When she isn't volunteering in her many activities, her days are filled with mothering her four children, pursuing her master of divinity degree at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, serving as council president of La Esperanza de Santa Maria Lutheran Church, and working at the comptroller's office at the University of Chicago.

"Walking her talk" makes Eva Savolainen a role model for her children and friends. It also makes her a witness for Christ to all who meet her.

Eva is a role model, a witness and mentor for me, her friend. When I despair over things, when I'm in *La Lucha* ("The Struggle"), she touches me with her calm and caring way—and allows me to rejoice.

With her former husband, Eva served as a missionary in Chile from 1969 to 1976 during the presidency



of Salvador Allende and the military regime of General Augusto Pinochet. "In Chile," says Eva, "I began to feel the call of being free to be able to serve to the glory of God."

An active member of the National Association for Hispanic Ministry, Eva is committed to lifting up the concerns and causes of Hispanic people—and enthusiastic about the gifts that Hispanic people of faith bring to ministry and witness. "We bring our music, our own way of worship, our liveliness which is like a breath of freshness to the church and imparts new life," Eva says. "We bring our diversity and ourselves to the feet of Jesus."

For me and for many others, Eva Savolainen is a great inspiration. I'm happy that in my daily *caminar* (walk), I have in Eva a wonderful co-traveler, who "walks her talk" and stands with those in *La Lucha*. ■

Myrta Robles
Chicago, Illinois

Care-of-Creation Crochet

Karen Weckerle

I first met Connie (Consuelo) Hails at the Southwest Pennsylvania Synodical Women's Convention when she volunteered to be on the Caring for Creation Task Force. She told me then that she crocheted tote bags, using plastic grocery bags instead of yarn! I was intrigued.

Connie gave me one of her tote bags to show at last year's Caring for Creation Conference in Asheville, North Carolina, (a Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America event), and others were intrigued as well.

A member of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Trauger, Pennsylvania, Connie is an avid knitter and crocheter. She first saw a pattern for a basket made out of heavy rope, but found the rope bulky and hard to work with. This led her to the idea of crocheting a tote bag out of plastic grocery bags. In creating the pattern, Connie incorporated techniques gained from years of crocheting rugs and knitting sweaters.

When Connie was finished making the bag, she needed handles for it. She tried using plastic bag



Rosie Henrickson, Connie Hails and Karen Weckerle with a bag crocheted from plastic bags.

handles, but they tended to stretch when the bag had heavy items in it. Her husband came home with some dirty used clothesline that a friend was throwing out. She laundered it and now uses that for the handles.

All kinds of plastic shopping bags can be used for the basic material—and what a great way of putting plastic to work and saving it from our landfills! Connie likes to mix the strips from different bags so that there is a variety of colors. The strips don't even have to be the same length.

The same technique can be used to make a rug. Both tote bags and rugs are easy to keep clean: just wash them using a garden hose and let them air-dry.

Connie's innovative tote-bag pattern has been presented at cluster meetings and at our Southwest Pennsylvania Synodical Women's convention. And now she is delighted to share it with Lutheran Woman Today readers. The only tools needed are some shopping bags, a crochet hook, the pattern and in-

structions below—and some time. Enjoy—and care for creation in the process. ■

Karen Weckerle is a member of the Southwest Pennsylvania Synodical Women's Organization Board, where she chairs the Caring for Creation Committee.

Instructions

Materials needed:

- Crochet hook, size J or K
- 70–90 plastic shopping bags, any size or color
- 2 1/2 yards rope or strong cord

Cut each plastic bag into a continuous strip 3 inches wide, beginning at the top and continuing in spirals (cut 4-inch strips if the plastic is especially thin). The strips need not be perfectly straight or even. Join strips together by overlapping 4 inches of each end, fold in sides, hold together and continue with stitch.

To make the bottom, chain 20. Single crochet (SC) in each chain. Make several SC in end stitch to go around corner. SC in each chain stitch on other side of chain. (Work extra SC at each end of every row, so that work lies flat.) Continue around with SC until bottom is about 18 inches long.

To make the sides, * chain 3 [counts as first double crochet (DC)], DC in each SC around bottom. Slipstitch in third chain of chain 3 at beginning of row.* Repeat from * to * until piece measures 12 inches, or desired height. For straps, lace rope across bottom, up the side, in and out between rows, shaping a loop for the handle, down the same side, across bottom, up and down other side.



Pattern field-tested by Frona Stelling, Perryville, Missouri.

MISSION:

Action

The Older Volunteer

After I retired from teaching, I got my first computer and became a volunteer coordinator for three English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. As a volunteer coordinator, I came to realize that no one volunteers to fail. (There's enough failure in the world without volunteering for it.) Volunteers need materials, orientation, support and structure to ensure success.

The church is basically a volunteer organization

It wasn't until after working as a volunteer that I fully understood that the church is basically a volunteer organization. In their "willingness to serve," volunteers are blessed with God's gift of grace.

It is in this volunteer community where so much happens. We **grow** in our faith in a community of worshipers. We **grow** in our gifts of leadership. In caring relationships we value our uniqueness and the God-given gifts of others. From within the context of this volunteer

Christian community **we act in the world.**

And, as an older volunteer, I have developed great respect for my peers. We've found that as older volunteers:

- **we know our limitations.** I know I will not be an artist or musician. On the downside of "three score years and ten," we are more selective. We rely on God-given gifts already honed with use.

- **we pick our battles wisely.** We don't jump on every bandwagon or swallow social programs whole, or espouse one side of a divisive issue. Instead, we ask: Are there real needs? What can I do?

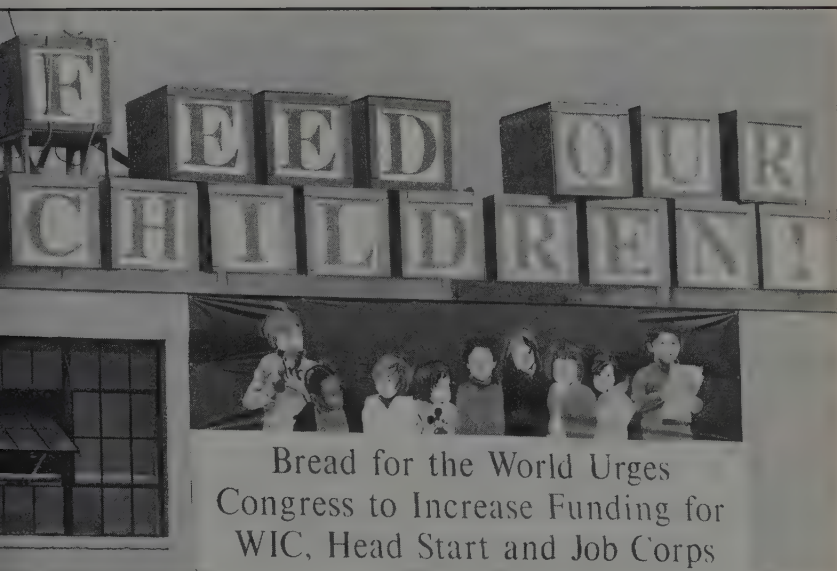
- **we are realistic enough not to tackle tough programs like illiteracy, hunger, and poverty by ourselves.** To gather enough force to make a perceptible dent in the problem, we tap into the structures, networks, and systems already in place. Action occurs where people and God work together. ■

Ardath Jagnow
Coralville, Iowa

MISSION:

Community

Building Blocks of Hope



Bread for the World Urges
Congress to Increase Funding for
WIC, Head Start and Job Corps

Each week, over 200,000 commuters pass by this giant display on the steps of Bread for the World's office in Washington, D.C. Bread for the World is attempting to increase funding of three successful and cost-effective programs that can help end childhood hunger.

One of the eight aims of Women of the ELCA, adopted at its Anaheim, California convention, focuses on family. Aim 7, "Primary/Family Relationships," seeks to strengthen

family and primary relationships by ministering to the needs of children and their caregivers.

One out of five children in the United States lives in poverty. Our efforts to support families must also include efforts to combat the root causes of poverty. ■

*Dolores Yancey
Director for Community
and Organizational
Development*

MISSION:

Growth

The Box

Barbara's husband and children looked at her in puzzlement when she came into the family room dragging a box behind her. She announced, "I volunteered to be the Mission: Growth chair this year and to help plan the monthly programs, ..." at which her family turned back to the television. Barbara was left mumbling to herself, "And I don't know where to start."

The Mission: Growth chair, it seems, is the keeper of a large, worn box with the words "St. Stephen's Women" written on all sides. The box contains every resource the women at St. Stephen's have received since the 50s.

Barbara worked late into the night digging through the box. It felt like a treasure hunt: exciting and overwhelming.

The next evening Barbara hit pay dirt: in the box she found the *Women of the ELCA 1992-1993 Catalog*. Ideas flooded her mind as she read about one resource after another.

The next day Barbara ordered *Blessed Are You*—a Women of the ELCA Program Idea Book—one of the resources she learned about in the catalog. When it came, Barbara decided the program, "Can We Do Evangelism Here?" would be ideal for the next meeting. She called the director for growth and witness (800-

638-3522, ext. 2741) for help in adapting the program.

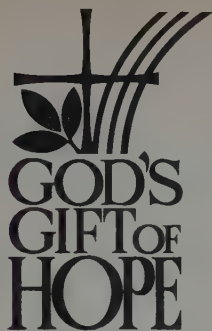
As Mission: Growth chair, Barbara found that learning about Women of the ELCA resources helped her learn a lot about the organization, its goals, aims, and triennial emphasis. Beyond the catalog, Barbara gleaned program ideas and learned about all kinds of resources—from Lutheran Woman Today magazine, to the Women of the ELCA Newsletter, the Action Flash, and the resource packets.

When Barbara's term was up she handed over "a new, improved box" to the next chair. It was the same box, but Barbara had cataloged its contents: Now it was easy to see what resources were available and what issues had been explored. At the top of the box was the latest Women of the ELCA catalog. ■

Valora Starr
Director for
Growth and Witness

The 1993-94 Women of the ELCA catalog will be available in April. Watch for a copy in the Spring/Summer Women of the ELCA Resource Packet, or call your nearest Augsburg Fortress location for a copy.

Let Me Count the Ways



Why should you attend the Second Biennial Convention in Washington, D.C., August 7-10? Let me count the ways this gathering of women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America might enrich your life.

Pre- and post-convention gatherings. Marie Fortune will headline a workshop on sexual abuse before the convention. A "Caring for Creation" follow-up will occur afterwards.

Pre-convention worship. Join worship at the National Cathedral on Friday night with others attending the convention.

History-making women. Hear the world's first two female Lutheran bishops speak!

Inspiring speakers. Hear Kathy Magnus, Christine Grumm, and Nancy Amidei.

Convention without Walls. Visit congressional offices and Lutheran ministries in the capital city.

Crossroads of Hope exhibit area. Learn more about the streets and parks of this exciting place in the March LWT, the convention is-

te.
Synodical Women's Organiza-

tion gatherings. Some SWOs will choose to gather for a meal at specified times.

8. Woman to Woman visits. Meet and greet guests from overseas and those Women of the ELCA participants who have represented us in other lands.

9. A fifth birthday celebration. Join the party with clowns, balloons, a commemorative plate, the gathering of in-kind gifts and of course, cake!

10. Quality workshops. It will be tough to choose which two workshops you'll attend from the over 40 offered during each of two time slots. Workshop categories include ministries and services of Women of the ELCA, growing spiritually, women and children living in poverty, responsible citizens in God's world, strengthening family relationships, growing personally, living in a cross-cultural world, and ministries of the ELCA.

And more! Discover your own reasons to experience "God's Gift of Hope." ■

*Joan Pope
Director for Peace
with Justice*

Anna Bartlett Warner

Karen Bates

When the great theologian Karl Barth was asked how he would sum up the gospel, he did not refer to the massive volumes he had written about the faith. Instead he said simply, "Jesus loves me, this I know."

For generations "Jesus Loves Me" has been one of the songs first learned and best loved by preschoolers. And for generations it has remained in the hearts of those who have learned it, adding hope in times of joy, giving comfort in times of sorrow.

The text to this profound yet simple hymn was written in 1860 by an American woman named Anna Bartlett Warner. Anna lived with her sister, Susan, on Constitution Island along the Hudson River in New York, near West Point Military Academy. Their father bought the island when he was a prosperous New York lawyer. The sisters lived quite comfortably until the financial panic of 1837. To help pay the expenses of staying in their beloved island home, both sisters made attempts to sell their writing. The need to sustain themselves financially became even more intense after their father, a widower, died, leaving his daughters with very little income.

Susan very successfully sold two novels—*The Wide, Wide World* and *Queechy*. *The Wide, Wide World* was

almost as popular in its time as its contemporary, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Anna sold a few stories for young people, but her greatest passion was for hymns. She compiled two collections: *Hymns of the Church Militant*, published in 1858, and *Wayfaring Hymns, Original and Translated*, published in 1869. "Jesus Loves Me" first appeared as published verse in *Wayfaring Hymns*. Originally, however, it was written as a piece of verse to fit in a novel, *Say and Seal*, that Anna wrote with her sister. In the novel, Anna's verse is spoken as words of comfort to a dying child.

Besides giving themselves to writing, for many years Anna and Susan conducted Sunday school classes for the cadets at West Point. The Warner House was willed to the academy when Anna died, after Susan, at the age of 95. To honor the spiritual contribution the sisters made to the lives of so many cadets, both were buried with military honors, and their home was made into a national shrine.

The song we know was completed in 1861 when William Bradbury put it to music and added its chorus, "Yes, Jesus loves me." Anna's words are said to have been translated in more languages than any other hymn. Each new generation of the baptized continues to embrace

Jesus Loves Me" as have generations before, as one of the most beloved of hymns.

Someone has said that John 3:16 presents the gospel in a nutshell. So also Anna Warner's song, in just a few words, carries the themes of the gospel. How do we know that we are Christ's people? Because of the witness of Scripture—"the Bible tells." In no other place can we better learn of God's love for us. Nowhere else can we better see what that love looks like. We "little ones," who are weak in so many ways, have a God whose love for us is so strong that God became weak, actually one of us, to save us.

Anna Warner's hymn reflects Scripture's great proclamation that we are a people who know "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). Christ's blood washes away all our sin. We face today and tomorrow free from yesterday's guilt. "He who died" releases us from sin's power to condemn—both now, and when we arrive at heaven's gate. And the one who became weak for us remains with us. Even as he promised, "close beside . . . all the way."

All the way! Jesus' love is personal. Each of us is the "me" he loves, from birth to death. He won't let go of any one of us. A wisp of a child and her great-great-grandmother—both belong in the song "Jesus Loves Me." ■

~~~~~ Jesus Loves Me ~~~~~

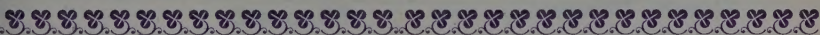
1. *Jesus loves me,
this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak but
he is strong.*

Chorus:

*Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.*

2. *Jesus loves me,
He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let his little child come in.*

3. *Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for thee.*



Rev. Karen Bates is associate pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington. Pastor Bates will write about other women hymn writers in "Hymns and Hers" columns during 1993.

New life for old LWTs?

I've been wondering if you knew of a way our old LWTs could be made use of. I would collect the ones from our church and send as soon as the last circle had their meeting. It seems such a waste of good reading material not to be used again.

We live in a small town and there isn't a mission near here. I may even be able to get the smaller church in the country to donate theirs.

Marvell Hahn

Stewart, Minnesota

See the next letter, which describes how the Lutheran Woman Today editorial office "recycles" its old LWTs. Chaplains at women's prisons or centers in the state may welcome a similar effort on your part. Your synod office may be helpful to you in locating such places.—ED.

I hope this letter finds you all well and in good spirits. I just wanted to express my thanks to you for continuing to supply us here at Dwight with Lutheran Woman Today magazine. Your magazine is popular and beneficial to our inmates. We truly appreciate everything you do. May God bless you all and your ministry.

The Rev. Philip R. Johnson
Senior Chaplain

Dwight Correctional Center
Dwight, Illinois

81 years young

While I'm sending in my renewal card and check for LWT, I want to tell you how much I enjoy reading your magazine. I am 81 years old and live alone, so have some extra time and I not only read [LWT] but

reread and study different portions. I live only about two blocks from my Lutheran church. I am trying to keep busy, on altar guild, helping in our library, as circle helper, and helper in the kitchen many days a week. I'm so glad God gives me strength to do what I can.

My husband died and my youngest son, who was only 28, died the following October with a brain tumor. What would I do without my heavenly Father, and my church? Sometimes we wonder what we would do—but he was and is always there. I'm so glad I was brought up in a Christian home. My parents took me to church, didn't send me. Well, I didn't mean to write all this but I guess sometimes it helps us to tell someone what we go through and how great our God is.

Nelda Hansen

Toledo, Ohio

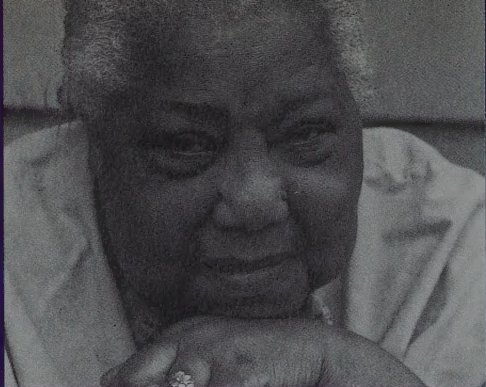
◆ HONOR ROLL ◆

Congratulations to LWT's newest Honor Roll congregations:

- **Elm River**; Galesburg, North Dakota
- **Goodhue**; Florence, South Dakota
- **Scandia**; Beltrami, Minnesota
- **Shelly Marsh River**; Shelly, Minnesota
- **South Blue Earth**; Bricelyn, Minnesota
- **Kongsvinger**; Donnelly, Minnesota.

In Honor Roll congregations all women subscribe to LWT. For information, write LWT Promotion, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440; Attention: Anita Oachs.

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